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UNCLAS MUSCAT 001109

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: NOBEL PEACE PRIZE NOMINEE JAILED

REF: A. MUSCAT 931

[B](#). MUSCAT 716

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) An outspoken elected former Shura Council deputy and current Nobel Prize nominee was sentenced July 13 by a Muscat court for insulting government officials in connection with the controversial arrests of Ibadhi activists charged by the government of belonging to an illegal organization. Prior to her conviction, the former deputy complained to EmbOffs of irregularities in her trial, which has gained considerable regional attention. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Tayba al-Ma'wali, one of Oman's first elected female Shura Council deputies and nominated this year among the 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize, was sentenced July 13 in a Muscat court to one and a half years in jail for insulting a public official while on duty and using a mobile phone to send allegedly slanderous and libelous text messages. The verdict, which was expected to be handed down on the 13th, was reported to the Embassy by Ma'wali's sister.

[1](#)3. (U) Al-Ma'wali's case has garnered public attention since her vocal support of the thirty-one Ibadhis sentenced May 2 for belonging to a secret organization earned her the scrutiny of Oman's security services. An outspoken civil rights activist since leaving the Shura Council due to term limits in 2003, al-Ma'wali participated in a rare protest march following the sentencing of the Ibadhis on May 2 (reftel B). She often sent highly critical text messages to personal friends and relatives about the protest violence, as well as objectionable opinions of senior-ranking government officials. These text messages were apparently intercepted by the government and entered into evidence against her during the trial.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Al-Ma'wali's summons to the Royal Oman Police in late June was quickly followed by a brief three-day trial and the July 13 sentencing. Prior to sentencing, she met with EmbOffs to discuss her case and apparently also did a telephone interview on the Al Hurra satellite channel. She alleged irregularities in her court case, including her claim that the prosecutor spent a considerable portion of the trial whispering with the judge and that her own attorney was not afforded opportunity for rebuttal. She also asserts that the judge is the uncle of the Minister of Information, one of the primary complainants in the case. (Further details of her meeting with EmbOffs will be reported septel.)

BALTIMORE